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ABSTRACT

Part of a resource package designed to assist local education agency personnel in improving the quality of instruction and supportive services to special needs students enrolled in vocational education programs, the last of nine instructor guides suggests several procedures for organizing and implementing an employer followup. It is explained that by collecting employer feedback on former student job performance and feedback from the former student, both the vocational instructor and the support services personnel have a strong basis for determining future student and program needs. Included are sample survey forms. (SBH)

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INSTRUCTOR'S GUIDE

CONDUCTING EMPLOYER FOLLOW-UP

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INTRODUCTION

This guide offers several tips for organizing and conducting an employer follow-up. The employer follow-up is basically used as a checkpoint for comparing the skills taught in the vocational course with those required on-the-job. By collecting this type of information, the vocational instructor is better able to design a program which reflects the skills necessary for successful occupational employment and advancement. Another important reason for the employer survey is to assess the performance of former special needs learners. By matching this information with the results of the student follow-up (Guide 8), the instructor has a more comprehensive means for determining student and program needs. Additional reasons for conducting an employer follow-up might include: (Wentling and Lawson, 1975)

- To determine how specific program graduates compare with graduates of other training programs
- To elicit recommendations for improving the vocational program
- To determine the recruitment practices of employing agencies
- To estimate supply and demand for individuals in particular occupations
- To improve public relations between the school and the business community

GUIDELINES AND CONSIDERATIONS*

The following information will take you through three major stages for conducting the employer follow-up: 1) planning the follow-up,

*Most of the procedures suggested herein came from two sources:

Davis, Dwight and Borgen, Joe. Planning, Implementing and Evaluating Career Preparation Programs. Bloomington, Illinois: McKnight Publishing Company, 1974.

Wentling, Tim L., Project Director. Employer Follow-up Survey. In Locally Directed Evaluation: Handbook 1. Springfield, Illinois: Division of Adult, Vocational and Technical Education, Illinois Office of Education, 1976.

2) administering the follow-up procedure(s), and 3) summarizing and utilizing the outcomes. Suggestions for completing each stage are provided.

I. Planning for the Follow-up

A. The goals of the follow-up will need to be determined. Is the purpose of the survey to obtain employer reaction to the skills currently being taught? Is the purpose to get a reading on former student performance? Does the follow-up include both goals and/or others?

B. The scope of the follow-up will also need to be identified. Will the follow-up include only graduates from last year's class? Or, will it include graduates from the past five years? Will the follow-up involve one, several, or all vocational courses? Will all former special needs learners, both graduates and dropouts, be included in the survey?

C. Develop the major evaluative questions to be addressed in the survey. For example:

- To what extent are the competencies taught within the vocational program in line with those required for on-the-job performance?
- How well do former students compare with other new employees who had other training?
- What competencies are former students lacking?
- What recommendations do employers present for program improvement?

D. Break down the major questions into specific criterion questions or items to be included in the employer survey. For instance, the broad question, "How do employers rate the performance of program graduates?" could be broken down into the following sub-questions:

-- compared to other employees?

-- relative to the time they began?

-- on specific knowledges, skills and attitudes?

-- on their potential for promotion?

Example Document #1 illustrates an employer survey which asks for a rating of employee performance in general job traits and also in specific occupational skill areas. This type of survey is appropriate for a specific occupational skill training program. If, however, the survey is based on a pre-vocational or a general work-experience program, or if it is to be used for more than one

program area, then a general survey would be more appropriate. Example Document #2 provides an example of a general survey instrument design.

E. Determine the method to be used in conducting the employer follow-up. Three methods may be used: 1) the mail questionnaire, 2) the personal interview, and 3) the telephone interview. When considering which survey method to use, three factors will be involved: 1) the number of persons to be surveyed, 2) the quantity and quality of information desired, and 3) the cost of obtaining the necessary information. If the numbers of persons to be surveyed is large, then the mail questionnaire is probably the most efficient method. However, the response rate on mail questionnaires is often low. Interviewing, particularly personal interviews, will likely yield the most usable information, but, if the numbers are high, the cost may be prohibitive.

F. The instrument should be reviewed by staff and/or advisory committee members for suggestions on content and format.

G. Administer the instrument to a select group of employers and ask them to mark any items that are ambiguous. Example Document #3 provides a completed sample of a form used for obtaining employer feedback on a pilot-test survey.

H. Revise the instrument, based on staff, advisory committee and/or employer feedback.

I. If a mail questionnaire is to be used, the former student's name will need to appear on the instrument. There is no need to identify the student as a former special needs learner.

II. Administering the Follow-up Instrument

A. Identify the employers who will be surveyed. If a student follow-up was conducted prior to, or concurrently with the employer survey, this may be the source of information.

B. If a mail questionnaire is being used, a cover letter will need to accompany this instrument. A sample cover letter is located in Example Document #4. Also, be sure to code the instruments with a number corresponding to the list of employer names.

C. A follow-up on nonrespondents may be necessary. This can be accomplished by: 1) mailing a reminder card, 2) sending a second cover letter and instrument, and 3) telephoning or visiting those who did not respond to the first request.

D. If the interview method is used, employers should be contacted prior to the actual interview to set up an interview time convenient for both parties.

III. Summarizing and Utilizing the Outcomes

A. The tally of responses may be done manually or by the use of a computer, depending on size of population surveyed and available resources.

B. A follow-up committee should summarize the results. This summary should include an explanation of how the data were collected and for what purposes. This summary should be presented in a simple, nontechnical, easy to understand manner.

C. Follow-up committee meets with special interest groups to draft conclusions and recommendations. Special interest groupings would include: vocational staff members, supportive service personnel, general education staff members, administration, and vocational advisory council.

D. Preliminary report is prepared by follow-up committee summarizing the conclusions and recommendations and a staff meeting is held for the purpose of discussing and exchanging ideas in general relative to the report.

E. A final draft of the report is prepared by the follow-up committee and disseminated to the school board at a regular meeting and to the community through news media.

F. Instructors, special service personnel and administrators follow through on report recommendations. A select committee should be established to monitor the plan for the purpose of assessing, on a periodical basis, the extent to which the recommendations have been met. Monitoring could include quarterly written reports by staff indicating changes made in classroom operation or modification of lesson plans.

FOR FURTHER INVESTIGATION

For additional information on conducting employer follow-up see:

Brolin, Donn E. Vocational Preparation of Retarded Citizens. Columbus, Ohio: Charles E. Merrill Publishing Company, 1976.

Davis, Dwight and Borgen, Joe. Planning, Implementing and Evaluating Career Preparation Programs. Bloomington, Illinois: McKnight Publishing Company, 1974.

Erickson, Richard C. and Wentling, Tim L. Measuring Student Growth: Techniques and Procedures for Occupational Education. Boston, Mass.: Allyn and Bacon, Inc., 1976.

Meyer, Warren G.; Crawford, Lucy and Klaurens, Mary K. Coordination in Cooperative Vocational Education. Columbus, Ohio: Charles E. Merrill Publishing Company, 1975.

Wentling, Tim L., Project Director. Employer Follow-up Survey. In Locally-Directed Evaluation: Handbook I. Springfield, Illinois: Department of Adult, Vocational and Technical Education, Illinois Office of Education, 1976.

Wentling, Tim L. and Lawson, Tom E. Evaluating Occupational Education and Training Programs. Boston, Mass.: Allyn and Bacon, Inc., 1975.

EXAMPLE DOCUMENT #1

Employer Follow-up Survey (Specific)

Farm Equipment Mechanic Program*

NOTE: *The information reported in this survey will be used for occupational education planning purposes only, and the source of the information will not be divulged to any other agency or party.*

1. Name of employee _____

2. Name of employing organization _____

3. Mailing address _____
(Number) (Street) (Town) (State) (Zip)

4. Telephone number _____

5. Name of person completing form _____

6. Your position or title _____

7. Total number of employees in your organization or business _____

8. The major function of this business _____

9. Job performed by above named employee _____

---

10. Please rate each of the general traits of this employee below. Circle the rating on the scale to the right of each trait: _____

	GENERAL TRAITS	Below Average			Average			Above Average		
A.	Integrity: Trustworthiness, honesty, and loyalty.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
B.	Dependability: Promptness and reliability in attendance.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
C.	Responsibility: Willingness with which work is accepted and performed.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9

*This form was developed and used by Wabash Valley College, Mount Carmel, Illinois. Reprinted from Davis, Dwight and Borgen, Joe, Planning, Implementing and Evaluating Career Preparation Programs. Bloomington, Illinois: McKnight Publishing Company, 1974, pp. 409-411. Used with permission of McKnight Publishing Company.

		Below Average			Average			Above Average		
D.	Initiative: Ability to plan and direct own work.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
E.	Judgment: Ability to make sound decisions.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
F.	Cooperation: Ability to work in harmony with others.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
G.	Leadership: Qualities of understanding people and directing work of others.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
H.	Attitudes toward work: Degree of enthusiasm with which one performs his or her work.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
I.	Emotional stability: Poise and self-control.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
J.	Courtesy and friendliness: Shows genuine consideration and kindness toward others.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
K.	Personal appearance: Neatness, cleanliness, appropriate dress and grooming.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9

Comments:

11. Please rate the importance of each skill for job performance, and then rate the employee on each of the skills listed that apply to his or her work.

SKILLS FOR FARM EQUIPMENT MECHANIC and/or PARTSMAN.	Importance to Know*			Employee's Performance of Each Skill**			
	U	D	E	VA	A	I	CD
A. Gas engine tune-up							
B. Diesel engine tune-up							
C. Reface valves, grind seat, ream guides							
D. Crank shaft and bearing installation							

*U = Unnecessary
D = Desirable
E = Essential

**VA = Very Adequate
A = Adequate
I = Inadequate
CD = Cannot determine

		Importance to Know*			Employee's Performance of Each Skill**			
		U	D	E	VA	A	I	CD
E.	Sleeve, piston, and ring installation							
F.	Use of micrometers							
G.	Hydraulic pump repair							
H.	Hydraulic cylinder repair							
I.	Gear and power train shaft and bearing							
J.	Use of compression gauge							
K.	Use of vacuum gauge							
L.	Locate and correct ignition malfunction							
M.	Locate and correct malfunction in the carburetor							
N.	Locate and correct malfunction in diesel injection pump							
O.	Use of electrical system test equipment							
P.	Use hydraulic system tester							
Q.	Isolate diesel engine problems							
R.	Remove and rework diesel pumps, nozzles and injectors							
S.	Understand need for special tools and test equipment							
T.	Use service manual							
U.	Follow equipment set-up and adjustment instructions							
V.	Invertory and stock control							
W.	Receiving, marking, and binning							

	Importance to Know*			Employee's Performance of Each Skill**			
	U	D	E	VA	A	I	CD
X. Customer relations							
Y. Salesmanship							
Z. Setting up window and store displays							

12. Please list the job skills you feel lacking in this employee other than those already listed.

13. Are there any weaknesses of this employee which now affect or have affected his or her job performance?

14. Is this employee capable of advancement in your business without additional training? Yes _____ No _____.

15. What recommendations would you make to us for improving the job skills of future employees?

16. Other comments:

EXAMPLE DOCUMENT #2

Employer Follow-up Survey (General)*

Please return by (date) .

To the Employer or Supervisor of: _____

1. In what capacity are you related to the employee? (check one)

_____ Employer _____ Supervisor _____ Other ___ _____
(write in)

2. What is the job title of this employee's position? _____
(Job Title)

3. Please check the following:

	Yes	No	Questionable
A. Person exhibits adequate pre-employment skills (application and interview).			
B. Person's cooperation toward work, company, supervisors, and co-workers is good.			
C. Person's (1) attendance; and (2) punctuality is good.	(1) (2)		
D. Person's (1) personal appearance; and (2) hygiene is good.	(1) (2)		
E. Person shows initiative on the job (eagerness to do what needs to be done).			
F. Person's quality of work meets acceptable standards.			
G. Person's quantity of work under normal conditions is acceptable.			
H. Person's knowledge of the job is adequate.			
I. Person's ability to learn new skills and job duties is adequate.			
J. Person readily accepts advice and criticism.			

*Sections adapted from surveys designed and used in Cooperative Work Training Programs at Neoga High School, Neoga, Illinois and Joliet Central High School, Joliet, Illinois, 1977-78.

	Yes	No	Questionable
K. Person exhibits proper use of tools and/or equipment.			
L. Person is dependable--completes jobs thoroughly with little or no supervision.			
M. Person talks to the boss about job related problems.			
N. Person exhibits safe working habits.			
O. Person follows company rules.			
P. Person exhibits adequate social behaviors/skills to deal with public and/or supervisors and co-workers.			

4. How would you evaluate this person generally as an employee?

_____ Outstanding _____ Above Average _____ Average

_____ Below Average _____ Poor

5. Advancement

A. Is there an opportunity for this person to move to a better position in your company? _____ Yes _____ No

B. If yes, to what position _____

C. Has this person ever been promoted to a better position within your company? Yes _____ No _____

D. If yes, from _____ to _____

E. Do you foresee this person going to a more responsible position in the future? Yes _____ No _____

F. If no, what is the reason for this person not being promoted?

_____

6. General Comments

A. Regarding this person's performance as your employee:

B. Regarding suggestions for improving our Cooperative Work Program:

EXAMPLE DOCUMENT #3

Employer Feedback Form for
Pilot Test Survey*

Employer: Bill Knight Firm: Basic Design Inc.

Would you please take a few minutes to answer the following questions.

1. How long did it take you to fill out the survey?
   10 minutes

2. Was it:

   ____ Too short

   ____ Too long

   X Acceptable in length

3. Would you have filled out the survey if you had not received a personal call from the instructor?

   X Yes

   ____ No

4. Were there any questions that were confusing or difficult to answer?

   ____ Yes

   X No

   If yes, which questions & why?

5. Can you think of any areas that were not covered on the survey that you would like to comment on--criticisms, praise or concerns?
   If you could limit the number of pages to two, I am sure that more people would reply.

*Adapted from instrument used by Industrial Cooperative Education and Cooperative Work Training Programs, Joliet Township High Schools, Joliet, Illinois, 1978.

EXAMPLE DOCUMENT #4

Employer/Supervisor Survey Cover Letter*

(use school letterhead)

Dear _____:

We need your help. We are currently conducting a study to evaluate the effectiveness of the Cooperative Work Training (CWT) program we offer to Joliet Township High School students. As an employer of one or more of our former students, we would like to ask a favor of you.

We have enclosed a short survey form which can be filled out in approximately 10 minutes. By your answers, we hope to identify the strengths and weaknesses of our present CWT program. This information will be helpful in improving the training of future CWT students.

No employer, employee, or supervisor will be identified in the results of the study, and all responses will be kept in complete confidence.

Please return the completed questionnaire in the stamped, self-addressed envelope by April 10, 1978.

Thanks so much for all your help!

Sincerely yours,

*Adapted from Joliet Township High Schools, District #204, Joliet, Illinois.